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Secretary Haig

Prospects for Peace in the South Atlantic

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Following is a statement by Secretary Haig before the 20th meeting of foreign ministers of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio treaty), Washington, D.C., May 27, 1982.

As the fighting intensifies and the cost in lives mounts in the South Atlantic, I think we all share a sense of anguish that it has not been possible to prevent this terrible conflict. It touches traditions and sympathies that run deep in our past and our national experiences. It is a loss and a failure of our generation.

We grieve over the heartbreak and the bereavement that the conflict brings to so many families in Argentina and Great Britain. We too share the emotions and pain of those families. Is there a country among us that has not counted itself a friend of both countries? Our hemisphere and the Western society of nations would be far poorer without their notable contributions to our common civilization. When friends fight, it is truly tragic.

It is from Great Britain that the United States drew the inspiration for many of its most cherished institutions. Most of us stood at the side of Great Britain in two world wars in this century. Great Britain is a vital partner in the alliance with Europe which is the first line of defense for Western civilization against the dangers of Soviet aggression.

Argentina is an American republic, one of us. It is a nation, like the United States, founded on the republican ideal that all men are created equal. Like my country it is a nation of immigrants and settlers whose own culture and civilization have long had the respect of my countrymen and the world. President Reagan moved early in his Administration to make clear the high value we place on our relations with the Government of Argentina and the high esteem in which we hold the Argentine people.

Preserving the Inter-American System

It is not only our friendship and our ties with the two countries that are at stake. This festering dispute has suddenly become a violent conflict that poses dangers to the very institutions and principles which bring us here and that have made this hemisphere, in many ways, the envy of the world.

The war puts the inter-American system under stress. Some say that this is an "anticolonial war" because the islands were formally administered as a British colony. Some say that since this is a war that pits an American republic against an outside power, the Rio treaty requires that all its members come to the assistance of the American republic.

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Others say that it is impossible to speak of colonialism when a people is not subjugated to another and, as we all know, there was no such subjugation on the island. Others say there is no way in which the inter-American system—which protects regional order based on law and the peaceful settlement of disputes—can be interpreted as sanctioning the first use of armed force to settle a dispute.

With full respect for the views of others, the U.S. position is clear: Since the first use of force did not come from outside the hemisphere, this is not a case of extracontinental aggression against which we are all committed to rally.

As we deal with this crisis, let us agree that there is far more to unite the nations of this hemisphere than to divide us. We must keep the future in mind. If we are to learn anything from the grim events of recent weeks, it is that conflict might have been averted if there had been better communication and confidence among American states. We should take as our guide the work of the generations of statesmen who gave us an inter-American system that is both visionary and practical. Their legacy is statecraft that is calm, reasoned, and just.

The very presence in this hall of so many distinguished statesmen indicates that we do agree—all of us—that the inter-American system is important. It has served us well. For two generations and more this hemisphere has been the region in the world most free of the scourges of war. The inter-American system and the Rio treaty have constrained and almost eliminated armed conflict between states of the Americas. The countries of Latin America spend less of their national resources for arms than any other area in the world. They have suffered less from Communist infiltration or aggression than any other part of the developing world. None of that would have been possible without the inter-American system of security.

The post-World War II achievements of the Organization of American States (OAS), now in its 92d year as the world's oldest regional international body, are largely responsible for our collective record as the world's haven from war. The contributions of the OAS to regional peace and harmony are almost too numerous to mention. Let me cite a few.

- This organization helped restore peace along the borders between Nicaragua and Costa Rica on four separate occasions (1948, 1955, 1959, and 1978).
- Similar OAS efforts helped contribute to calming disputes, as between Ecuador and Peru (in 1955 and again in 1980) or Honduras and Nicaragua (1957), or to diminishing tensions, as between Bolivia and Chile (1962) and between Haiti and the Dominican Republic (1963).
- In 1971, the OAS successfully urged Ecuador and the United States to avoid widening their differences over international fishing boundary rights. As one Ecuadoran writer noted at that moment, this OAS action proved that "the inter-American system functions and that its most powerful member did not vacillate one instant in recognizing the equality of its weaker associated partner."
- By taking an early and steadfast stand against violations of diplomatic staffs and premises, the organization played a vital humanitarian role in 1980 in ending terrorist takeovers. One of these situations was a diplomatic mission (Colombia) and the other an OAS office (El Salvador).
- During the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the legal position of the OAS had a major psychological and practical effect on the Russians.
- In another serious instance, the OAS imposed sanctions on a member state when it was proved that the intentions of that regime (Trujillo in the Dominican Republic) were aimed at assassination of the president of another OAS country (Romulo Betancourt of Venezuela).
- When riots broke out in the Panama Canal Zone in 1964, an OAS team assisted in stopping bloodshed; the organization's principled solidarity eventually helped bilateral negotiations to resolve what President Woodrow Wilson called the greatest problem dividing the United States and Latin America from each other.
- In the Dominican Republic in 1965, after the outbreak of civil war, the organization acted decisively to restore peace, setting the stage for an impressive democratic evolution.
- When fighting between Honduras and El Salvador broke out in 1969, OAS action helped put a quick stop to the bloodshed and fighting. Within 48 hours the OAS arranged a cease-fire, with contending forces withdrawing to *status quo ante bellum.*

For me the inter-American system is one of the unique forces that have helped the new world realize its special and privileged destiny, a hemisphere with almost unlimited human and material potential yet with the means to prevent or control the conflicts that have prevented other continents from realizing their potential.

The South Atlantic conflict could put into danger the principles and institutions we have constructed so laboriously and which have served us so well. We must protect the integrity of our institutions so that they can serve us as well in future crises, which could affect any of us, as they have served us in the past.

Efforts to Resolve the Conflict

We face a conflict that involves us all, but to which the Rio treaty does not well apply. It is a dispute over competing claims of sovereignty, each with profound historical and emotional sources.

We know how deep is the Argentine commitment to recover islands Argentines believe were taken from them by illegal force. This is not some sudden passion but a longstanding national concern that reaches back 150 years and is heightened by the sense of frustration over what Argentina feels were nearly 20 years of fruitless negotiation.

We know, too, how deeply Britain, in peaceful possession of the disputed territory for 150 years, has been devoted to the proposition that the rights and views of the inhabitants should be considered in any future disposition of the islands. No one can say that Britain's attitude is simply a colonial reflex to retain possession of distant islands. In the last 20 years no less than nine of the members of the Organization of American States received their independence in peace and goodwill from Great Britain.

For its part, the United States has not taken—and will not take—any position on the substance of the dispute. We are completely neutral on the question of who has sovereignty. Indeed, 35 years ago, at the 1947 signing of the final act of the Rio conference which created the Rio treaty, the U.S. delegation made this clear at the same time it set forth our position that the treaty is without effect upon outstanding territorial disputes between American and European states.

Faced with a conflict for which the inter-American system was not designed, American republics have turned instinctively to that fundamental principle of world order, the encouragement of the peaceful settlement of disputes. That was what the United States did. Our effort began even before April 2, when we offered to the two sides our good offices to help find a solution to the South Georgia incident. Argentina declined.

Then, when it became apparent that Argentina was preparing to land troops on the islands, President Reagan called President Galtieri to urge him not to go ahead. We told President Galtieri in the most friendly but serious terms what the consequences would be. I can hardly take any satisfaction in knowing that our predictions have proved prescient.

After April 2, both President Galtieri and Prime Minister Thatcher asked the United States to see whether it could be of assistance. At President Reagan's direction, I undertook two rounds of intense discussions in each capital.

The first meeting of the organ of consultation also promoted peaceful negotiation. Meeting in this very hall, we, the foreign ministers of the Americas, urged that peace be maintained and that law prevail as the foundation of our international relations.

Immediately afterward, President Belaunde of Peru took the initiative to put forward a peace plan, drawing also on the fundamental elements of Resolution 502. We worked in close consultation with him.

Let me now report to you some of the specific elements involved in our efforts to resolve this dispute, which has proved so extraordinarily difficult to resolve. On April 27, as prospects for more intense hostilities arose, the United States put forward a proposal of its own. It represented our best estimate of what the two parties could reasonably be expected to accept. It was founded squarely on Resolution 502.

That proposal called for negotiations on the removal of the islands from the list of non-self-governing territories. It specified that the definitive status of the islands must be mutually agreed, with due regard for the rights of the inhabitants and for the principle of territorial integrity. And it referred both to the purposes and principles of the charter and to the relevant resolution of the U.N. General Assembly.

Those negotiations were to be completed by the end of the year. Pending that, an interim authority composed of Argentina, Britain, and the United States was to oversee the traditional local administration, to be sure that no decision was taken contrary to the agreement. Argentine residents of the islands were to participate in the councils for this purpose, in proportion to their numbers. During the interim period, travel, transportation, and movement of persons between the islands and the mainland were to be promoted and facilitated without prejudice to the rights and guarantees of the inhabitants.

The proposed interim authority of three countries was to make proposals on how to take into account the wishes and interests of the inhabitants and on what the role of the Falkland Islands company should be. Should the negotiations not succeed in the time afforded, the United States was to be asked to engage in a formal mediation/conciliation effort in order to resolve the dispute in 6 months.

The British Government indicated that it would give the most serious consideration to acceptance of our proposal, although it presented certain real difficulties for it. However, Foreign Minister Costa Mendez informed me that the proposal was not acceptable to Argentina.

On May 5 a simplified text was forwarded by Peru to Buenos Aires at the initiative of President Belaunde. It called for:

- An immediate cease-fire;
- Concurrent withdrawal and non-introduction of forces;
- Administration of the Falklands Islands by a contact group pending definitive settlement in consultation with the elected representatives of the islands;
- Acknowledgement of conflicting claims;
- Acknowledgement of the aspirations and interests of the islanders would be included in the final settlement;
- An undertaking by the contact group to insure that the two parties reached a definitive agreement by April 30, 1983.

Britain made clear that it could seriously consider accepting the proposal. Argentina declined to consider it, asking instead for the U.N. Secretary General to use his good offices as, of course, it was Argentina's full privilege to do.

To promote negotiations is also what the Security Council and the U.N. Secretary General have done. We are heartened that the two parties—and the Security Council as a whole—have now been able to agree to give a new mandate to the Secretary General to find a basis for peace.

The Collective Search for Peace

What has been the approach of the international community as a whole must remain the policy of this body. We must strive to resolve the conflict, not seek to widen it. We must work to use the rule of law and the principle of non-use of force to settle the conflict, not seek to challenge these vital principles. We must search for ways in which we can all join to help bring about peace, not ask the Rio treaty mechanism to adjudicate a conflict for which it was not conceived.

It is right and proper that signatories to the Rio treaty should convoke a meeting of foreign ministers when they perceive a threat to peace in the hemisphere. It is this right which has served so well in preserving peace in this hemisphere. In times of danger we need the collective wisdom of all members of this body. This is of critical importance to the smallest among us who cannot afford large standing armies to defend their independence. It is this principle of collective security on which rests that other principle—nonintervention—which is vital to our relations.

We here have a special responsibility to insure the peace of the hemisphere, as signatories of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, of the Charter of the Organization of American States, and of the Charter of the United Nations, and as nations of the Western Hemisphere. We should take no action

and make no decisions which increase tensions without enhancing the prospects for a negotiated settlement of the struggle in the South Atlantic.

Resolution 502 embodies the principles which must govern our search for peace. We must have the strength to seek a solution, described well to us by [Brazilian] President Figueiredo, in which there is neither victor nor vanquished.

The Secretary General of the United Nations has now been given a new mandate to search for peace. The most important thing we could do here would be to give our unanimous collective support to that effort. We should reassert the validity of Resolution 502 as the indispensable framework in which a peaceful solution has been sought and will ultimately be found. And we should call on both parties to reach a peaceful negotiated solution.

As the Secretary General of the United Nations proceeds, I would hope he would give particular attention to the ideas put forward by the President of Peru 10 days ago, as well as those advanced by the Government of Brazil on May 24. Although they may require completion and adjustment, these proposals contain much that is equitable and fair; they merit careful attention.

For our part, the United States has remained in touch with both parties throughout the crisis. We have tried in countless ways to help Argentina and Britain find a peaceful solution. We are actively engaged in working with the Secretary General in support of his most recent mandate for peace.

This conflict has by now proven that the young men of Argentina and Great Britain can fight with skill and determination. They have the courage to die for the dignity of their nations. They have the strength and valor to endure in desperate struggle in a desolate climate.

Now the time has come for older heads to accept the risks of compromise and the hazards of conciliation to bring the suffering and dying to an end. Wisdom as well as struggle is a test of valor. The dignity of a nation is honored not only with sacrifices but with peace. The South Atlantic has reverberated with the fury of war. It must now be calmed by the wisdom and courage of peace. ■

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